The Ozark Trail at Peck Ranch

Produced by the Missouri Department of Conservation

Cover *drawing*: David Hamilton

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A 6 1/8-MILE STRETCH of the Ozark Trail weaves through the fields and forests of Peck Ranch Wildlife Management Area. In addition to offering hikers scenic vistas and good exercise, it provides them with an opportunity to see wildlife management in action. Use the map in the center of this book as your guide. Special numbered stations along the trail illustrate the various ways the Conservation Department assists wildlife. Walk quietly, and you may see some of the animals which benefit from these efforts. We hope your hike is enjoyable and educational. Visit often!

There are steps you can take to ensure your safety and to preserve the Ozark Trail for those who follow:

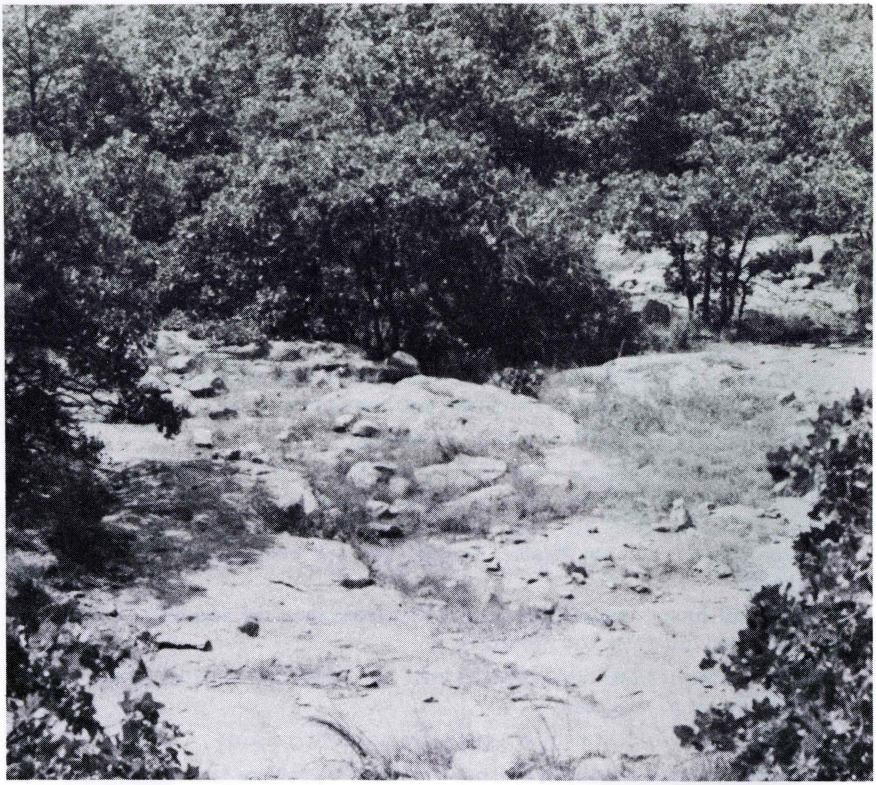
- Camp at least 100 feet from the trail, water and scenic areas. Leave your campsite so no one will know you were there.
- Treat all water used for drinking or cooking.
- Use a backpacking stove for cooking and build a fire only if necessary. Do not build fires on edges of bluffs, on glades or in caves. If a fire is necessary, clear the area of combustible material and make sure you drown the fire before leaving. Do not encircle the fire with rocks.
- Bury all human waste at least 100 feet from the trail and water. Pack out everything else you packed in.
- Use caution when crossing streams. At times stream crossings are impossible to negotiate.
- Enjoy plants in their natural setting. Do not collect plants.
- Be considerate of others; respect the rights of private landowners and remember that solitude is also a resource to be protected.

The official Ozark Trail marker is a green ⚲ on a white rectangle. A white paint blaze also is used and, in addition, supplemental markers may be used by each agency or landowner. Two tilted markers placed one above the other warn of an abrupt turn in the trail in the direction of tilt. Be alert, and always carry a map and compass.

The development of the Ozark Trail is an ambitious project that has been undertaken by the members of the Ozark Trail Council which includes state and federal land-managing agencies, trail user groups and landowners. The trail is envisioned someday to extend from St. Louis through the scenic Ozarks to the Arkansas border, where it will connect with the Ozark Highlands Trail and proceed west to the Arkansas-Oklahoma border. If you would like to learn more about the Ozark Trail or if you have comments concerning the trail, write the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Historic Preservation, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.

The Ozark Trail Council has officially adopted the Peck Ranch segment as a component of the Ozark Trail and has approved the information contained in this brochure.

1 Stegall Mountain Glades



THE ROCK of the eastern and southern slopes of Stegall Mountain is among the oldest exposed rock in the state, more than one billion years old. Called *rhyolite*, it forms the core of Missouri's only true "mountains:" the St. Francois Mountains of Iron, Madison and St. Francois counties. Stegall Mountain is an outlier of this range.

The exposed rock forms a series of natural, open areas or glades on the top and sides of Stegall Mountain. These hot, dry openings may appear barren, but they are homes for many interesting plants and animals. Spectacular wildflower displays occur here in the spring and early fall.

Dens and Cavities in Trees 2

OLD TREES provide cavities large enough to shelter many kinds of Missouri wildlife. Cavities are caused by woodpeckers, dead or broken limbs, insects, fungi attacks and lightning. In turn, they are used by nuthatches, chickadees, owls, bats, squirrels, raccoons, opossums and even treefrogs. Some animals may only use cavities as protection from occasional storms while others nest or hibernate in them. Good management means leaving some old trees for wildlife.

3 Pine Plantings

BEFORE 1960, many pines were planted on public lands in south Missouri. At that time they were considered the most desirable timber species. Though most reforestation today is done with hardwoods, pines still have important economic and wildlife values.

Rogers Creek 4

CLEAR, SPRING-FED ROGERS CREEK has been designated a Missouri Natural Area. This special management decision means that the stream will remain undisturbed, its delicate ecology and high water quality protected for future generations of hikers. Look closely for some of the 15 kinds of small fish that live here. You may also spot a crayfish, a pickerel frog or one of the creek's harmless water snakes.

5 Standing Snags

A SNAG is a standing dead tree from which the leaves and most of the limbs have fallen. Missouri snags provide a portion of the life support system for 72 bird, 12 mammal and 4 reptile species. Watch for a wren nesting in an old limb or a red-bellied woodpecker searching for insects under loose and peeling bark. Other birds use snags as song perches, feeding perches and lookout posts. Like old trees, snags are often left standing by managers who appreciate their wildlife values.

Pine Regeneration 6

SHORTLEAF PINE FORESTS originate from seed rather than root or stump sprouting. A pine seed must be in contact with bare mineral soil in order to germinate. This area was bulldozed to exposed the soil prior to seeding. The dozing also reduced hardwood competition to give full sunlight to the young pine seedlings. Lespedeza, a relative of clover, was sown with pine seed to provide early cover for the seedlings as well as food for wildlife.

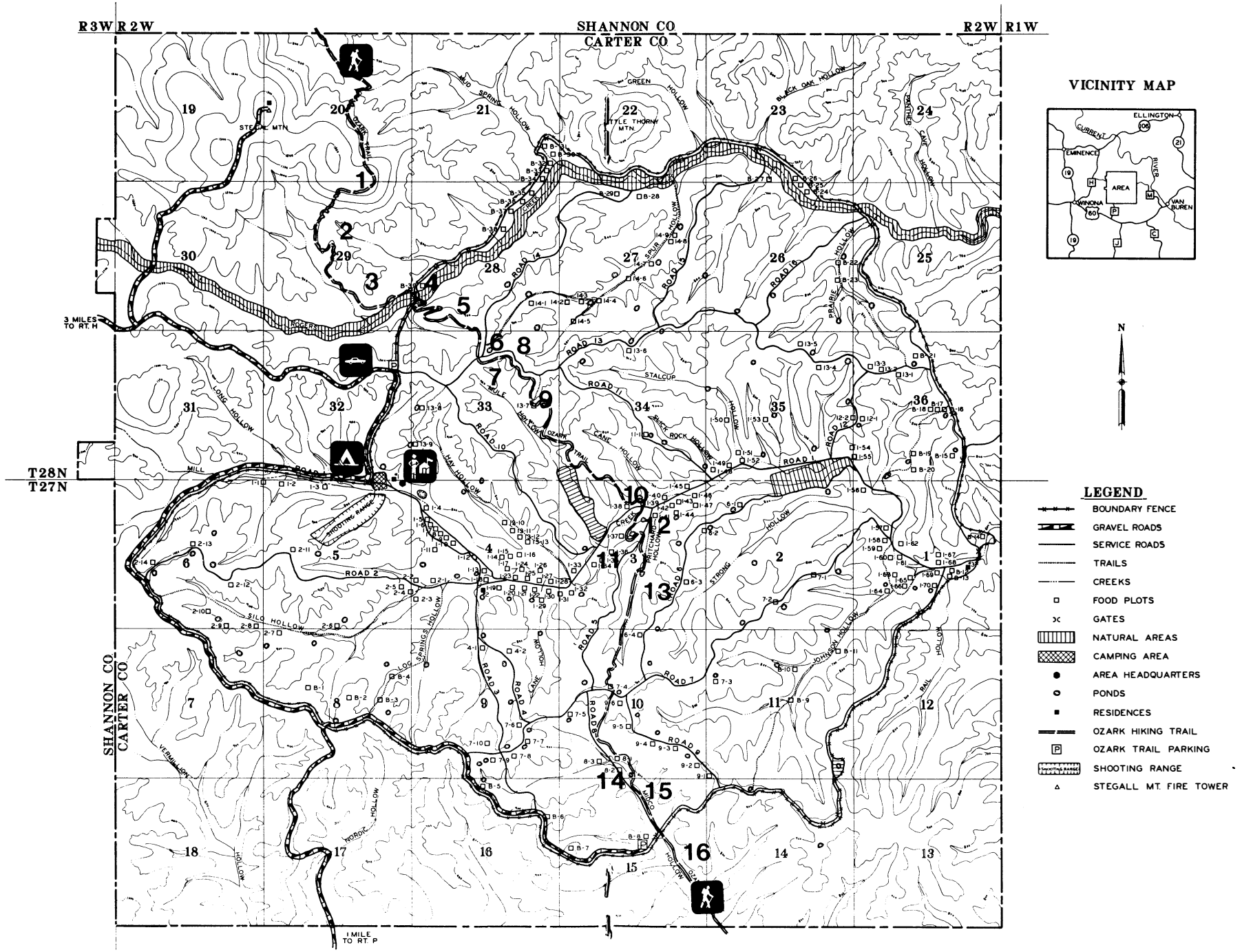
7 Timber Sale

MATURE PINE AND OAK TREES are harvested when their growth slows and they become mature. All trees to be cut are marked and scaled for volume. Then they are sold to an independent operator who cuts, skids and hauls the timber to a sawmill. Sometimes trees are cut out of immature stands to thin the stands and improve growth.

Forest management involves planting or regenerating a new forest, thinning young stands of trees and harvesting mature timber. The basic aim of forest management is to keep the forest productive. This involves not only producing high-quality wood products, but also includes watershed, wildlife and recreational values.

Oak Regeneration 8

MOST ALL HARDWOOD STANDS originate from stump or root sprouts rather than seed. This oak regeneration area was an old mature stand that was harvested. All trees more than about two inches in diameter were cut to encourage sprouting and create a new forest of even age and size. The dense young growth provides browse for deer.



PECK RANCH WILDLIFE AREA

22368 ACRES

9 Green Browse Food Plots

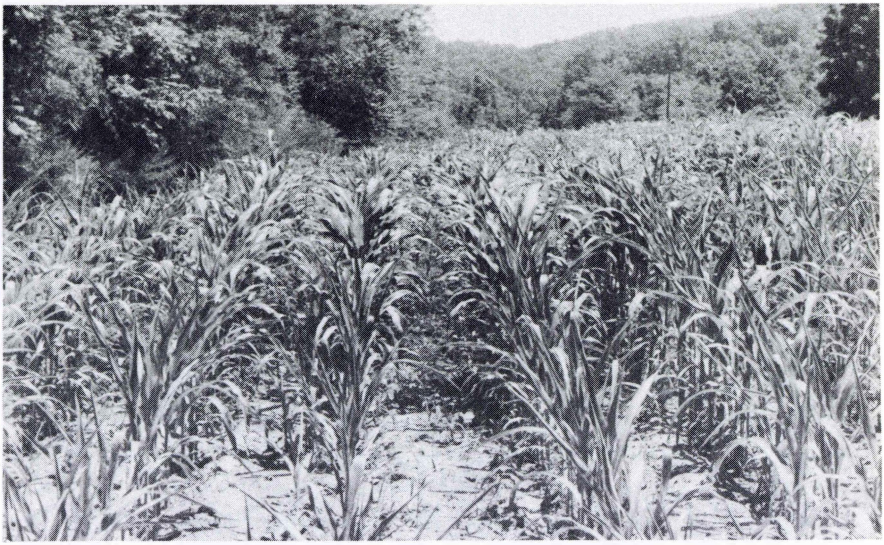
HELPING WILDLIFE POPULATIONS often means planting food for them. Wheat and clover can be planted and maintained for from four- to five-year periods. This requires less work than preparing annual plots of corn or milo, so most of our plantings are browse plots. They supply high-quality protein for deer and turkeys in the spring and fall, and lots of insects for young turkeys throughout the warmer months.

Rocky Point Glade 10

GLADES, the name given to dry, rocky, open areas found throughout the Ozarks, occur in many places at Peck Ranch. Those on Stegall Mountain are formed on rhyolite rock. Rocky Point Glade occurs on dolomite, a much younger rock type.

It takes specially-adapted plants and animals to survive the glade's desertlike summer. Watch for flowers like Indian paintbrush, Missouri primrose and Missouri coneflower. Fragrant sumac, catbriar, redbud and persimmon are some of the woody plants found here. Unusual reptiles thrive on glades, too: you may see racerunners, fence lizards, coachwhip snakes or even the uncommon pigmy rattlesnake.

11 Annual Food Plots



ANNUALLY WORKED FOOD PLOTS supply animals with high energy and protein food during the late fall and winter. Wildlife use annual crops like corn, milo, sunflowers and soybeans to prepare themselves for the toughest time of the year. These plots are especially important when population levels are high or acorn crops are poor. Deer, small game, turkeys, other birds and predators all benefit from annual food plots.

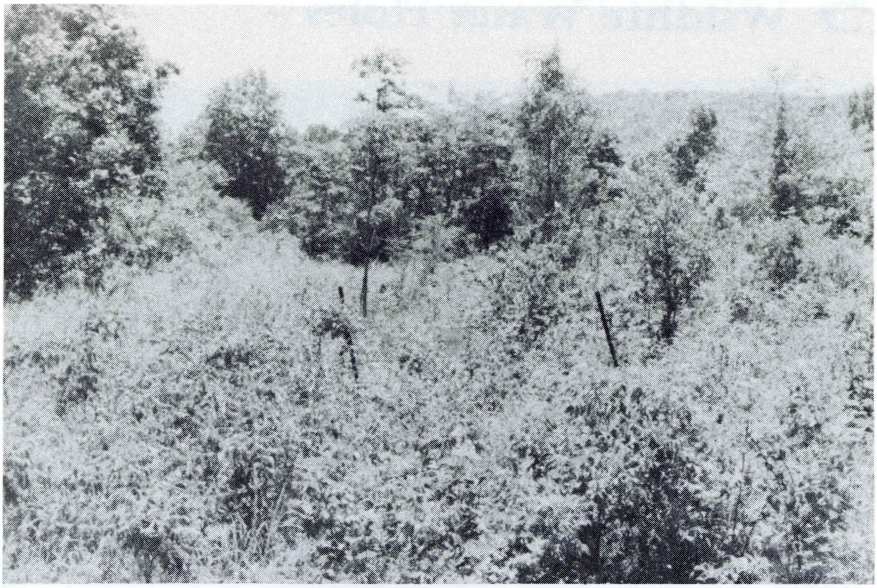
Pond Management 12

MANAGING WILDLIFE can mean helping amphibians, too. Over a dozen species of salamanders, toads and frogs require fishless woodland ponds for breeding. These valuable, man-made wildlife ponds can be improved for amphibians by placing small brush piles in and along the edge of the water. Many kinds of salamanders and frogs attach their clumps of eggs to submerged tree branches. Logs placed along the edge of the pond will be used by adult salamanders for shelter as they move in and out during their breeding season. Many other forms of wildlife utilize these ponds for drinking or to find food.

13 Pritchard Lake

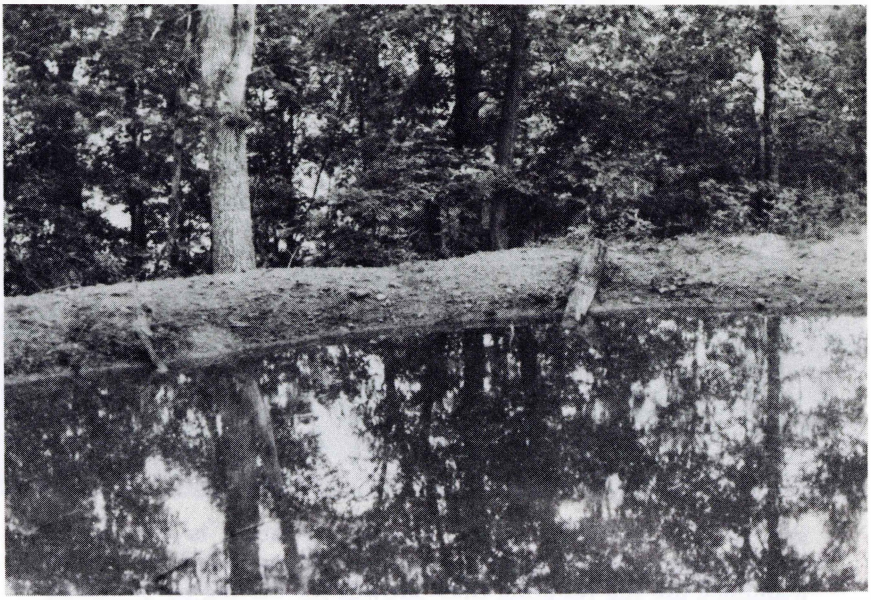
ALL KINDS OF WILDLIFE benefit from a lake. Water, food and cover are all found here. Wood ducks often nest in the large duck boxes we have placed on the trees. Once the ducklings tumble out of the nest, they find food and protection from predators under the buttonbush in the shallow end. Fish use the deeper water. Though man-made, the lake is spring fed so it never dries up.

Ruffed grouse, first restocked on this area in 1981, use the woods around you. The yellow, numbered posts are part of a grouse survey we conduct every spring.



IN SOME OLD FIELDS the natural vegetation is allowed to grow without interference from man. Many birds and small mammals use the resulting thick growth for nesting cover and as a valuable food source. In time, old fields develop into forests. They can also be kept in this stage by discing, mowing or prescribed burning ever three to five years. A variety of habitats encourages a variety of wildlife.

15 Wildlife Water Holes



TURKEYS, DEER and most forms of wildlife utilize these small ponds for drinking and food sources. Research reveals that hen turkeys must nest within one-fourth mile of water to satisfy themselves and their broods' water requirements. Good, overhead tree cover reduces evaporation during the summer, so water is always available. In addition, most of these small ponds are near food plots. We maintain 119 natural and man-made water holes on Peck Ranch.

Dead and Down Trees 16

LOGS AND OTHER WOODY DEBRIS—stumps, rootwads, bark and piles of limbs—are found on the floor of most forests. These were long viewed as fire hazards, but now wildlife managers realize the importance of dead wood as essential wildlife habitat. Logs on the ground contain an abundance of insects, grubs and other invertebrates that are a staple diet for many birds, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Chipmunks and white-footed mice use the downed logs for den and hibernation sites, food cache locations, runways and observation posts. Gray foxes and bobcats often have their young in large hollow logs. Many animals benefit from downed wood, so managers now leave it on the ground and sometimes build brush piles specifically for wildlife.

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